

Communication important for better understanding: US ambassador to Vietnam

16:17 14/07/2005

VietNamNet - Michael Marine the US ambassador in Vietnam had an open and candid talk with VietNamNet readers, yesterday afternoon.

"Before the mission as USA ambassador in Vietnam, I was aware of many changes in your country. But I was amazed by the speed of development here," he said, starting the meeting.



US Ambassador Michael Marine (right) and VietNamnet's Editor-in-Chief Nguyen Anh Tuan at VietNamNet's Head Office

The first time he came to Vietnam was in 1988, while working in the Vietnam- USA section. The impression he retained from that time was that Vietnam was not very developed. Now the current development of Vietnam has surprised the ambassador.

In his talk, he emphasized the need to facilitate communication and interaction between the two peoples. We should find as many opportunities as possible to encourage Vietnamese officials to go to USA. "I myself seek ways to encourage American people and officials to visit Vietnam," he said.

"Since I assumed the mission, I have encouraged staff working in the Embassy in Hanoi and the Consulate Office in HCM City to go out of the office to meet Vietnamese people and leaders to explain to them about USA, we need to continue this assignment" .

"I have been to 19 locations in the provinces since I came here. I plan to visit one province a month," he said.

Officials in the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington should also spend time to visit senators and common house representatives to ensure that they understand the viewpoint of Vietnam in events and issues.

During PM Phan Van Khai's USA visit, he spent the whole day at Capitol Hill. The openness of the Vietnamese leader with a very important sector of US authority was much appreciated, and served to increase mutual understanding.

In relation to commerce and investment, Marine says he knows that some American companies are looking for opportunities to make investment into infrastructure, power generation, and energy in Vietnam. These are attractive areas for investment from USA.

"I believe that Vietnam is in preparation for WTO accession, creating facilities to attract more investment from USA and other countries. Vietnam has made much progress in the legal environment for investment. Once in WTO, Vietnam will have many opportunities to receive investment from overseas and USA specifically.

The ambassador was also present for the meeting of MP Phan Van Khai and President Bush. Some VietNamNet readers put forward questions regarding human rights, an ongoing concern of the USA and an important issue in negotiations which needs the attention of President Bush. Human rights was an important component of the meeting, but it was not presented as an outstanding issue. President Bush said that the issue of human rights should be resolved by the two countries.

USA wants to develop relations with Vietnam in as many fields as possible, not only confined within trade and business. These issues are very important for the American people, for President Bush and other important US characters.

Vietnam has been listed as a country with freedom of religion. USA is pleased to see the new policies with the Decree promulgated by the MP on freedom of belief and new laws on religions. The policies create the foundation for extended opportunities for Vietnamese citizens to follow individual beliefs. "We hope to see more perspectives for Vietnam to be excluded from the list of religious concerns".

In the role of American Ambassador, Marine has been making efforts to bring US investors to Vietnam. Two months ago, he toured 6 American cities for 10 days together with other ambassadors to regional countries. They met leaders in business, universities and ordinary American citizens to talk to them about opportunities in Vietnam. However, he said, "Vietnam is to decide on the invitation".



Vietnam has to compete with other regional countries in investment attraction. Investors will make investment in places with safety and security.

The talk was not confined to political and economic issues, but also to other areas of culture. As a language barrier, very few American people can read and write Vietnamese. By now many works of literature are being translated into English. The US embassy plans programs for the meeting of artists, writers and economists from the two countries to discuss and exchange ideas for better appreciation and understanding. He denied the point of view that the USA does not take interest in Vietnamese literature because of a fear of red culture.

A well-known Vietnamese writer will visit the USA to attend a composition program of IOWA University, a very popular literature program in the US. He will have opportunities to meet and communicate with American colleagues there.

To commemorate the 10 year anniversary of normalised relations between the two countries, the US Embassy will work in coordination with the Vietnamese Ministry of Culture and Information to arrange the visit of artists and performers to each others countries for workshops, performances, and exhibitions. They will be useful and interesting interactive meetings for both sides.

On the case against the American Chemical Companies that produced Agent Orange used in the Vietnam War, Marine refused to comment stating that he was in an inappropriate position to make comment while the case is still in the investigative proceedings.

However, he emphasized that American people and the government would continue all efforts for humanity support to Vietnamese invalids. During the last 15 years, the US government has provided US\$15mil to assist Vietnamese with disabilities related to the war.

The ambassador also shared information with *VietNamNet* readers about his life. He loved and felt happy with his life in Hanoi, he liked Vietnamese foods and particularly liked Vietnamese noodles.

"Each morning I get up very early, I run for physical exercise around Hoan Kiem Lake. I know the people who do morning exercise at the same time as me, that is a very pleasant feeling. My wife is staying with me in Vietnam. She finds life here wonderful. She loves traveling looking at various "profiles" of Vietnam", he said. He also said that his 2 daughters have graduated from University and will be visiting Vietnam next year.

To end the talk, *VietNamNet's* Editor-in-Chief Nguyen Anh Tuan conveyed his best wishes to the ambassador on the occasion of USA National Day and 10th anniversary of normalization of Vietnam- USA relations. "May prosperity, happiness and peace come to the American people and the country. Best wishes to Vietnam- USA relations, and as the US President often ends his speech "God bless America".

VietNamNet
